

Impact of Word of Mouth and Purchase Decision on Brand Image of Viral Food within Marketing Strategy: A Systematic Literature Review

Original Article

A'isy Fiklil Nafisah^{1*}, Budi Eko Soetjipto²

^{1,2}Faculty of Economics and Business, State University of Malang, Indonesia
Email: ^{1*)}aisy.fiklil.2404139@students.um.ac.id, ²⁾budi.eko.fe@um.ac.id

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Abstract

The contemporary marketing landscape emphasizes the importance of brand image and brand equity for competitive advantage. Viral food, fueled by digital technology and social media, presents a unique context where Word-of-Mouth (WOM) significantly influences consumer perception and purchase decisions, subsequently shaping brand image and equity. While existing research explores WOM, purchase decisions, brand image, and brand equity individually, a gap exists in understanding their integrated roles within the viral food phenomenon. This study addresses this gap by employing a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to investigate how different forms of WOM and consumer purchase experiences uniquely contribute to viral food's brand image and equity. Furthermore, it examines the strategic role of marketing efforts in leveraging WOM and influencing purchase decisions to build a strong brand image and sustainable brand equity in this dynamic environment. This research aims to develop an integrated conceptual model and provide valuable insights for marketers to manage viral food brands and capitalize on their often-fleeting popularity to build lasting brand equity. The findings will contribute to both theoretical understanding and practical application in the context of managing brands within the temporary trend.

Keywords: Word of Mouth, Purchase Decision, Brand Image, Marketing Strategy, Systematic Literature Review.

1. Introduction

The contemporary marketing landscape, marked by fierce competition and ever-changing consumer preferences, necessitates that companies prioritize building and sustaining a strong brand image and significant brand equity. Brand image, at its core, is the collective mental picture of consumer perceptions, associations, and beliefs about a particular brand, acting as a psychological cornerstone that shapes consumer decisions and long-term loyalty. In contrast, brand equity goes beyond simple awareness and image, representing the additional value inherent in a product or service solely due to its connection with a well-known and respected brand name. These intangible assets have proven to be key drivers of lasting competitive advantage, allowing companies to distinguish their offerings from competitors, support premium pricing strategies, and cultivate deeper, more resilient relationships with their customer base (Keller, 2013). The proliferation of digital technology and the widespread use of social media platforms have given rise to a captivating phenomenon known as "viral food." This term describes culinary products, both food and drinks, that experience an extraordinary surge in popularity in a relatively brief timeframe, largely propelled by the rapid spread of information and content through online communication channels (Jenkins et al.,



2016). The intrinsic qualities of viral food, such as its compelling visual presentation, distinctive and innovative tastes, or the experiential sensations it provides, frequently ignite widespread discussions and sharing among consumers in both digital and physical spaces. Specifically concerning viral food, the role of Word-of-Mouth (WOM) has become a powerful influence.

Indeed, the influence of WOM in this scenario often surpasses the effectiveness of more conventional marketing strategies, as potential consumers tend to perceive information from personal and trusted sources as more genuine, credible, and relevant (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Furthermore, consumers' purchase decisions regarding viral food also play a vital role in shaping brand image and building brand equity. Direct experiences following the purchase and consumption of viral food directly contribute to the formation of their subjective brand perceptions. Post-purchase satisfaction or dissatisfaction can either reinforce positive narratives established through WOM or, conversely, damage the evolving brand image. Moreover, repeated purchases and consumer loyalty towards viral food brands over time cumulatively contribute to the development and strengthening of overall brand equity (Aaker, 1991). Marketing strategies devised and implemented by companies are crucial for effectively capitalizing on the viral food phenomenon. Companies have the opportunity to proactively encourage and amplify WOM through various initiatives, including launching creative and engaging social media campaigns, forging strategic partnerships with relevant influencers, or designing unique and memorable product or service experiences that motivate consumers to share their experiences voluntarily.

The power of WOM in this context frequently outweighs that of more formal, traditional marketing approaches, as prospective customers are inclined to view information from personal and reliable sources as more authentic, trustworthy, and pertinent (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Furthermore, the frequency of repeat purchases and the level of consumer loyalty towards viral food brands over time collectively contribute to the establishment and enhancement of overall brand equity (Aaker, 1991). Moreover, a thorough understanding of the various factors that influence viral food purchase decisions, including compelling visual attractiveness, convenient product accessibility, and competitive price points, is paramount in devising effective marketing strategies to cultivate a positive brand image and enduring brand equity within this ever-changing food environment.

While academic research has extensively examined individual concepts such as Word-of-Mouth (WOM), consumer purchase decision processes, brand image formation, and brand equity accumulation, alongside some exploration of WOM's impact in broader digital marketing contexts, a notable gap exists in research specifically integrating these three core concepts within the unique phenomenon of viral food. Several significant research gaps warrant further investigation. The specific mechanisms through which actual consumer experiences after buying and consuming viral food contribute to their brand perceptions and overall brand value still require more comprehensive exploration. Thirdly, there's a lack of comprehensive integration between WOM, the purchase decision process, and the marketing strategies employed by companies within the specific context of viral food. Existing research may not have adequately analyzed how different marketing strategies can effectively leverage the power of WOM and influence consumer purchase decisions to build a strong brand image and sustainable brand equity for popular food products. Lastly, the temporal and often fleeting nature of viral food trends raises intriguing research questions about how WOM dynamics and purchase decisions during a viral food's peak popularity period influence long-term brand image formation and maintenance. Research explicitly considering the temporal aspects and unique product lifecycle of viral food remains relatively limited. This research offers several

novel aspects with the potential to significantly contribute to the existing literature. Firstly, it adopts a specific focus on the unique context of the viral food phenomenon, which exhibits distinct consumer behavior dynamics and product lifecycles compared to more established conventional products or services. Finally, this research has the potential to significantly contribute to the theoretical and practical understanding of brand management in the context of temporary trends. It is anticipated that the findings of this research will provide valuable new insights for marketers and food industry practitioners on how to effectively manage viral food brands, capitalize on often short-lived popularity momentum, and build more sustainable brand equity despite the potentially transient nature of these product trends. Through the application of a rigorous Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology, this research will systematically identify, critically evaluate, and synthesize relevant previously published research to address the identified research gaps and provide significant theoretical contributions and practical implications in understanding the complex dynamics of viral food brand image and equity formation through the influence of WOM and consumer purchase decisions within the broader framework of marketing strategy.

Despite the extensive academic literature separately examining key concepts like Word-of-Mouth (WOM), consumer purchase decision-making, brand image development, and brand equity accumulation, along with some studies exploring WOM's impact in the wider realm of digital marketing, a significant gap persists in research that explicitly integrates these three core ideas within the specific context of viral food. Several identified research gaps underscore the need for further investigation. First, there's a lack of deep insight into how the nuances of different WOM forms (e.g., positive/negative online, traditional offline) distinctively shape the brand image and equity of viral food. Existing research may not have thoroughly analyzed how these various channels and types of consumer communication uniquely affect brand perceptions and value for trending food items. Second, there's limited empirical research directly connecting consumer purchase experiences with the creation of brand image and equity for viral food.

Research that explicitly considers the temporal aspects and unique product lifecycle of viral food remains relatively scarce. This study introduces several novel elements that can significantly contribute to the existing body of knowledge. First, it adopts a specific focus on the singular context of the viral food phenomenon, which exhibits distinct consumer behavior patterns and product lifecycles compared to more established conventional offerings. Second, it aims to construct a fully integrated conceptual model that simultaneously investigates the roles of WOM and purchase decisions in shaping the brand image and equity of viral food, thus offering a more holistic and unified understanding of the intricate relationships between these variables. Third, this research will explicitly examine the strategic roles of various marketing elements in moderating or mediating the connections between WOM, purchase decisions, and the creation of brand image and equity for viral food, thereby providing deeper insights into how companies can effectively manage these variables. Lastly, this research holds the potential to significantly advance the theoretical and practical understanding of brand management within the context of temporary trends. It is anticipated that the findings will offer valuable new insights for marketers and food industry professionals on how to effectively manage viral food brands, capitalize on often short-lived popularity, and build more sustainable brand equity despite the potentially transient nature of these product trends. By employing a rigorous Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology, this study will systematically identify, critically assess, and synthesize relevant previously published research to address the identified research gaps and provide significant theoretical contributions and practical implications for understanding the complex dynamics of viral food brand image and

equity formation through the influence of WOM and consumer purchase decisions within the broader framework of marketing strategy.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and its expanded version, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), offer a strong theoretical foundation for understanding how Word-of-Mouth (WOM) and various situational elements related to viral food collectively shape brand image and equity. These theories fundamentally argue that an individual's intention to act is the most direct predictor of their behavior, specifically, the choice to buy viral food. TRA posits that this intention is primarily determined by two factors: an individual's evaluation of the act itself (their positive or negative feelings about purchasing the viral food) and subjective norms, reflecting the perceived social pressure from important social circles (like friends, family, and online communities) regarding whether they should perform the behavior. TPB extends this model by including perceived behavioral control, which refers to an individual's belief in their ability to carry out the behavior. In the context of viral food, this can involve aspects such as how easily the food is available, its cost, and the convenience of obtaining it. Applying these theories to viral food provides valuable insights.

Positive WOM, acting as a form of social influence, can significantly impact both a consumer's attitude towards trying the food (by highlighting its positive qualities and others' experiences) and the prevailing subjective norms (by creating a sense of widespread adoption and social desirability). Furthermore, characteristics inherent to viral food, such as its wide availability due to effective marketing and distribution, or its perceived affordability relative to its perceived value or hype, can directly affect a consumer's perceived behavioral control, making them more or less likely to intend to purchase. This intention then directly leads to the actual purchase. Over time, consistent positive experiences fueled by favorable WOM and easy purchase opportunities can enhance brand equity, characterized by greater brand loyalty and positive brand associations. Therefore, TRA and TPB offer a useful framework for analyzing how the social buzz of WOM and the practical considerations of viral food's accessibility and desirability converge to influence consumer intentions, drive purchasing behavior, and ultimately contribute to the evolving brand image and equity within the dynamic world of viral culinary trends.

2.2. Effect of Word of Mouth (WOM)

Word-of-Mouth (WOM) has become a central topic of interest for scholars and practitioners in diverse disciplines. Numerous studies have lauded WOM as an exceptionally effective marketing tactic. Its rise in prominence is attributed to the increasing tendency of individuals to seek information from their trusted social circles, finding these sources more impactful than conventional advertisements. For businesses, consumers who look for purchasing guidance consider advice from friends and family to be highly beneficial in their buying process. As a result, consumers are more likely to trust the opinions of their acquaintances, particularly friends, when making purchase decisions. Moreover, messages shared organically through WOM can be viewed more positively by recipients compared to traditional mass advertising. WOM also provides a significant benefit to consumers facing uncertain purchasing decisions. Research corroborates that higher perceived risk leads consumers to be more likely to spread negative WOM to assist others. This research focuses on the capacity of WOM to alleviate different types of risk, including socio-psychological and

financial concerns related to business choices, supporting a body of literature that recognizes WOM as a tool for risk reduction.

2.3. Purchase Decision

The process by which consumers navigate the multitude of choices available and ultimately decide what to purchase stands as a cornerstone in the field of consumer behavior research. Understanding this intricate journey is paramount for marketers seeking to effectively engage with their target audience and drive sales. A foundational framework for comprehending this process is the five-stage model proposed by Kotler and Armstrong in 2018. This traditional model delineates the consumer's path as a sequential progression through need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, the actual purchase decision, and finally, post-purchase behavior. Schiffman and Wisenblit (2015) underscore the significance of both internal and external information sources, highlighting how their relative importance can vary depending on factors like product complexity, prior experience, and perceived risk.

Solomon (2018) emphasizes the impact of these contextual elements, suggesting that the intended purchase can sometimes be altered or abandoned due to these immediate influences. Finally, the consumer enters the post-purchase behavior stage. This critical phase involves the evaluation of the purchased product or service against expectations. Furthermore, post-purchase behavior is amplified through online platforms, with consumers readily sharing their experiences and opinions through reviews and social media, influencing the decisions of others. These evolving dynamics necessitate a more nuanced understanding of the consumer purchase process, one that acknowledges the interconnectedness of online and offline experiences and the powerful role of social influence in shaping consumer choices. For marketers to remain effective, a deep grasp of these changing influences is no longer optional but an essential prerequisite for developing successful engagement and conversion strategies.

2.4. Viral Food

The phenomenon of "viral food" has emerged as a transformative force in the global food industry, driven by the pervasive penetration of social media and innovative digital platforms. Unlike traditional food trends that may evolve gradually through word-of-mouth or conventional media, viral foods experience a rapid and often short-lived surge in popularity, fueled by the unprecedented dissemination of content through online platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook. These platforms function as incubators where unique culinary creations gain visual appeal, emotional resonance, and cultural endorsement, propelling them into the mainstream within a matter of days or weeks. One of the primary characteristics of viral food is its strong visual appeal. In a digital landscape where attention is a premium commodity, viral foods must captivate the senses instantly. Vibrant colors, enticing textures, and artistic presentation become paramount, transforming ordinary dishes into shareable spectacles. For instance, trends like rainbow cakes, melting chocolate bombs, and over-the-top decorated desserts owe their popularity to their undeniable visual allure, which entices social media users to capture and share countless photos and videos. Novelty and uniqueness also play a crucial role in the virality of food.

Yet, as quickly as these trends rise, they often fade, replaced by the next big thing. For food businesses, this means balancing short-term hype with long-term strategy. A viral dish can bring a flood of customers, but staying relevant requires constant innovation. Social media's power lies in its ability to turn a niche idea into a global sensation overnight, connecting food lovers worldwide. Whether it's the joy of trying something new or the thrill of

capturing the perfect food video, viral foods remind us that eating is no longer just about taste—it's about experience, creativity, and the stories we share online.

2.5. Brand Image

Brand image and brand equity are two interconnected yet distinct concepts central to marketing theory and practice. Brand image refers to the overall perception or impression that consumers hold about a brand, shaped by their interactions, experiences, and what they hear from others (Keller, 1993; Kotler & Keller, 2016). A positive brand image can lead to its the intangible asset that reflects the strength of a brand in the marketplace, influencing consumer preferences and purchase decisions (HBS Online, 2024).

The relationship between brand image and brand equity is often viewed as sequential. Positive brand associations and perceptions contribute to higher perceived quality and greater brand loyalty, ultimately leading to stronger brand equity (Jurnal IBIK, 2024). Conversely, a negative brand image can erode brand equity, making it difficult to attract and retain customers. Measuring brand equity is more complex and often involves assessing brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand associations, as well as analyzing market performance indicators such as price premiums and market share (Qualtrics, 2020; Bolder Agency, n.d.).

Recent literature continues to explore the impact of digital platforms and social media on both brand image and brand equity. Online consumer reviews, social media engagement, and influencer marketing play a significant role in shaping brand perceptions and building brand equity in the digital age (Choedon & Lee, 2020). Understanding and managing both brand image and brand equity are crucial for long-term brand success and sustainable competitive advantage in today's dynamic marketplace.

2.6. Marketing Strategy

Marketing strategy serves as the fundamental roadmap for how an organization plans to engage its target market, communicate its value proposition, and achieve its marketing objectives. It encompasses a comprehensive set of decisions and actions centered around understanding customer needs, creating value, and building profitable relationships (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Product decisions involve creating offerings that meet the needs of the target market, encompassing features, quality, branding, and packaging (Armstrong & Kotler, 2020). Price strategy involves determining the value exchange for the product, considering costs, competition, and customer perceptions of value (Nagle & Holden, 2002). Place (distribution) focuses on making the product accessible to the target market through effective channels and logistics (Rosenbloom, 2012). Promotion encompasses all communication activities used to inform, persuade, and remind target customers about the product or brand, including advertising, public relations, sales promotion, and direct marketing (Belch & Belch, 2018).

Contemporary marketing strategy increasingly emphasizes the importance of customer relationship management (CRM) and building long-term, mutually beneficial relationships with customers (Buttle & Maklan, 2015). This involves understanding customer needs and preferences on an individual level and delivering personalized experiences. Furthermore, the rise of digital marketing and social media has profoundly impacted marketing strategy, offering new channels for communication, engagement, and data collection (Ryan & Jones, 2012).

In conclusion, marketing strategy is a dynamic and multifaceted discipline that requires a deep understanding of the market, customers, and the competitive landscape. It provides the framework for creating, communicating, and delivering value to target audiences and achieving organizational objectives in an increasingly complex and evolving marketplace.

2.7. Conceptual Framework

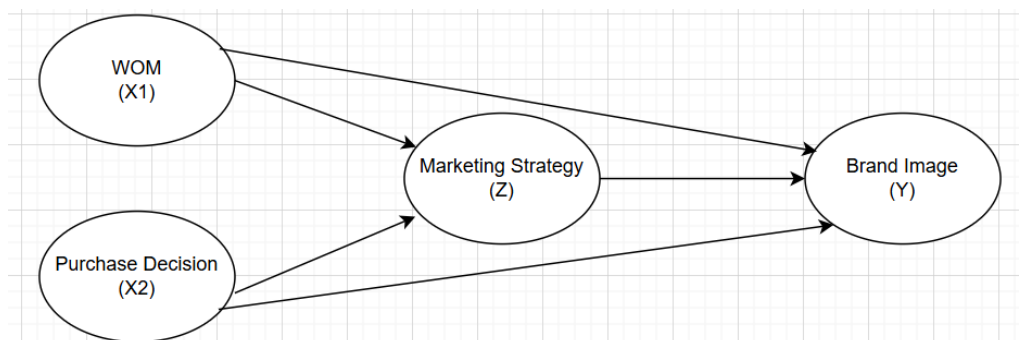


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Independent variables include Word-of-Mouth (WOM), which refers to informal communication between consumers about the viral food, with key dimensions including valence (positive/negative), volume (extent and frequency of spread), source credibility, and content virality, and Purchase Decision, encompassing the consumer's action of buying the viral food and subsequent behaviors, such as speed of adoption, frequency of purchase, involvement level, and satisfaction level; the potential mediating variable is Consumer Experience with Viral Food, representing direct interaction and consumption, including sensory experience, emotional response, and social sharing; dependent variables are Brand Image, the overall consumer perception of the viral food brand, including brand awareness, brand associations, brand personality, and perceived uniqueness/novelty, and Brand Equity, the value added to the viral food due to its brand name, including brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand awareness (strength), and brand associations (favorability, strength, uniqueness); moderating/mediating factors include Marketing Strategy, acting as an overarching influence with specific elements relevant to viral food such as branding, promotion, distribution, pricing, and product innovation; the framework posits that positive and widespread WOM can create initial awareness and positive associations, influencing purchase decisions, and positive purchase experiences reinforce WOM and shape brand image and loyalty, that marketing strategies can amplify positive WOM and ensure availability, that the novelty of viral food drives WOM and trial, and that consistent positive experiences contribute to brand equity, whereas negative WOM or experiences can damage brand image and equity.

3. Methods

A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is a rigorous research method employed to identify, evaluate, and interpret all relevant studies on a specific research topic or question. In contrast to traditional literature reviews, which may be more narrative and subjective, SLR utilizes a strict, structured approach to minimize bias and enhance the reliability and validity of findings. The primary goal of an SLR is to provide a comprehensive and objective summary of the existing empirical evidence, achieved through a systematic and transparent process that allows for replication. This methodology is crucial across various fields, including medicine, social sciences, and business, as it enables decision-makers, practitioners, and researchers to make more informed decisions based on available evidence. Key characteristics of an SLR include a clear research question, a comprehensive and systematic search of multiple sources, predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria, critical appraisal of study quality, systematic and transparent data synthesis (narrative or quantitative), and detailed documentation to ensure transparency and replicability. The SLR process typically involves formulating a

focused research question, defining inclusion and exclusion criteria, conducting a comprehensive literature search, selecting studies, assessing study quality, extracting relevant data, synthesizing the data, and interpreting and reporting the findings. By adhering to this systematic and transparent process, SLR offers a valuable approach to summarizing and synthesizing research evidence, producing more reliable and valid results compared to traditional literature reviews.

4. Results and Discussion

This study performed a bibliometric analysis utilizing VosViewer software. The author used the following keywords: "Impact of Word of Mouth and Purchase Decision on Brand Image of Viral Food within Marketing Strategy."

4.1. Word of Mouth

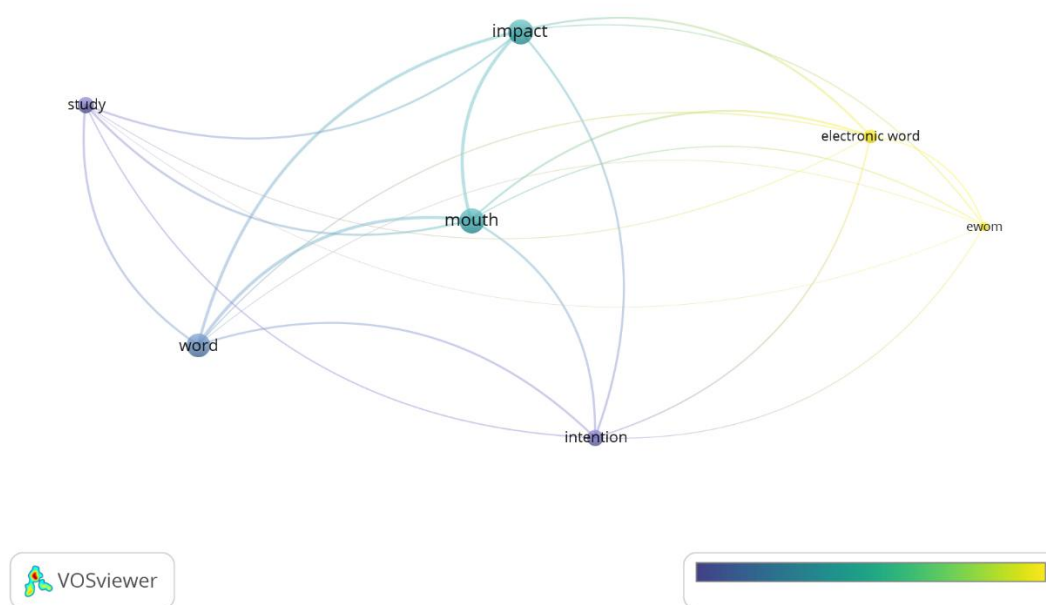


Figure 2. VOSviewer Word of Mouth

In this visualization, the size of each node typically reflects the frequency or significance of the corresponding concept within the analyzed data. The nodes that may appear include "Impact" as the primary focus, "Word" and "Mouth," likely referring to "Word of Mouth," "Purchase Decision" as a research variable, "Brand Image" as another variable, "Viral Food" as the subject of study, "Marketing Strategy" as the research context, "Intention," potentially indicating purchase intention, and other terms such as "Stubby," "Electronic Word," and "Ewom." The lines connecting these nodes, or links, signify relationships or associations between the concepts, with the thickness of a link often indicating the strength of that relationship. Furthermore, the color of the nodes and links can serve to group related concepts together or to represent other attributes, such as a specific value scale depicted by the color bar at the bottom.

Within the context of the research title, this visualization offers several potential interpretations. A large "Impact" node with numerous strong connections would suggest the centrality of the impact concept in the analysis. Strong links between nodes related to Word of Mouth (like "Word," "Mouth," "Electronic Word," and "Ewom") and "Brand Image" imply a significant influence of Word of Mouth on shaping the brand image of viral food. Moreover, a connection between "Purchase Decision" and "Brand Image" indicates an interrelation

between buying choices and brand perception. The presence of a "Viral Food" node connected to other concepts highlights how the virality of food is influenced by what people discuss and their purchasing decisions. The connection of "Marketing Strategy" to other nodes emphasizes that these interactions occur within a broader marketing strategy framework. A strong link between "Intention" and "Purchase Decision" aligns with consumer behavior theory. Finally, the clustering of node colors could indicate different subtopics or perspectives within the research. For a more precise interpretation, additional information regarding the type of data analyzed, the frequency or relevance scores of the keywords, and the specific research questions would be very beneficial

4.2. Purchase Decision

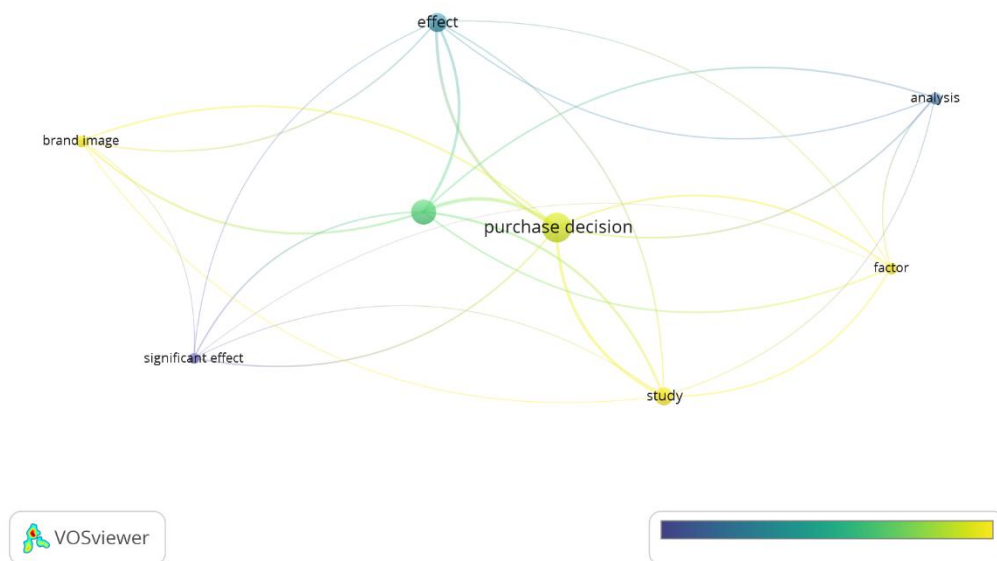


Figure 3. VOSviewer Purchase Decision

This network visualization from VOSviewer presents a visual representation of concepts and keywords relevant to your research titled "Impact of Word of Mouth and Purchase Decision on Brand Image of Viral Food within Marketing Strategy." The size of each circle (node) in this network reflects how frequently or how significantly that concept appears in the analyzed data. The connecting lines (links) between nodes illustrate the relationships or associations between these concepts, where the thickness of a line indicates the strength of that relationship. The colors of the nodes and links indicate a value scale, likely related to the publication time of the data or grouping based on specific themes.

Several key elements visible in this visualization and their relevance to your research title include the "purchase decision" node, which appears central and strongly connected to other nodes, signifying its role as a core concept. The presence of the "effect" node indicates an analytical focus on impact or influence, aligning with your research's focus on "impact." The "brand image" node appears as the primary dependent variable. The "significant effect" node suggests the presence of statistically significant relationships within the data. The "study" and "analysis" nodes indicate that this visualization originates from the analysis of various research studies. The "factor" node highlights the identification of various factors, including word of mouth and purchase decision, in your research context. Although nodes for "word of mouth," "viral food," and "marketing strategy" are not explicitly present, their relevance can be interpreted through the relationships between existing nodes. For instance, the connection between "purchase decision" and "brand image" shows their interrelation, which is a focus of your research within the context of viral food. The influence of word of

mouth might be reflected in the formation of purchase decisions and the perception of brand image. The presence of "analysis" and "study" nodes implies a broader research context, likely including marketing strategies. For a more in-depth interpretation, additional information regarding the data source, the frequency and strength of relationships between keywords, and the meaning of the node colors would be very helpful.

4.3. Brand Image of Viral Food

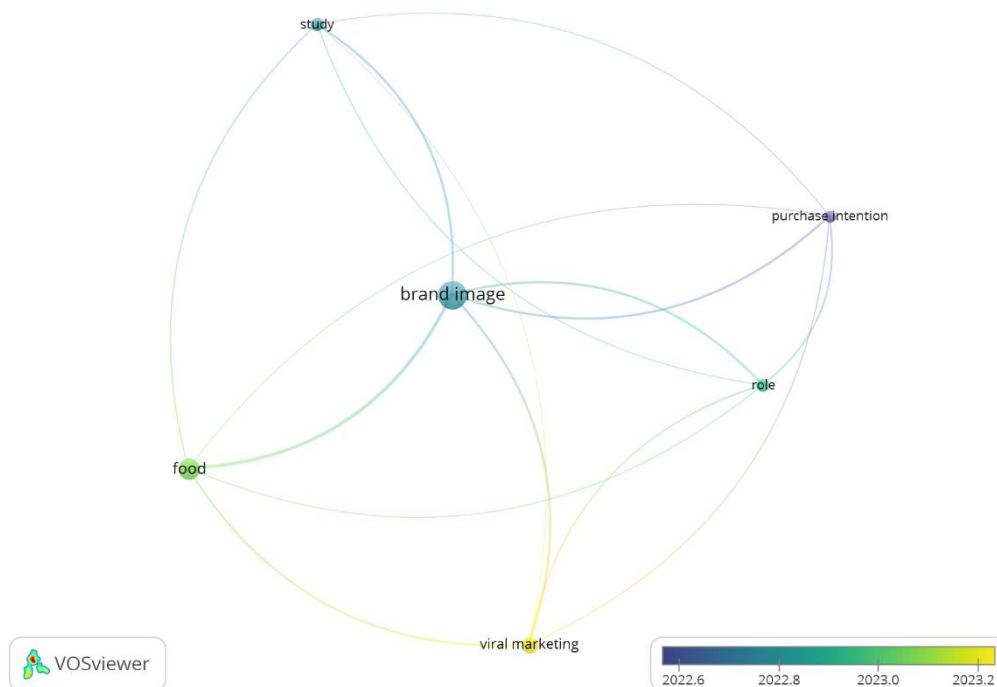


Figure 4. VOSviewer Brand Image of Viral Food

This network visualization, generated by VOSviewer, illustrates the relationships between various key concepts relevant to your research on the impact of word of mouth and purchase decision on the brand image of viral food within the context of marketing strategy. The size of each circle (node) reflects the significance or frequency of a concept's appearance in the analyzed data, while the connecting lines (links) between nodes indicate associations, with the thickness of a line signifying the strength of that relationship. The colors of the nodes and links indicate a publication time scale, moving from earlier publications (blue) to more recent ones (yellow).

The "brand image" node emerges as a central element with numerous strong connections, emphasizing its role as the primary focus of your research. The concepts of "food" and "viral marketing" are linked to "brand image," highlighting the importance of the viral food context and its marketing strategies in shaping brand perception. "Purchase intention" is also connected to "brand image," suggesting that the intent to buy is related to how the brand is perceived. The "role" node indicates an exploration of the roles of various factors in influencing brand image and purchase intention. The presence of the "study" node suggests that the analysis is based on various research studies. Although "word of mouth" and "purchase decision" do not appear as explicit nodes, their influence can be implied through the relationships between other concepts, such as "viral marketing" and "purchase intention" with "brand image." Overall, this visualization provides an initial overview of the relationships between concepts relevant to your research and shows research trends over time. For a more

in-depth interpretation, additional information regarding the data type, the strength of the relationships, and the specific research focus would be very helpful.

4.4. Marketing Strategy

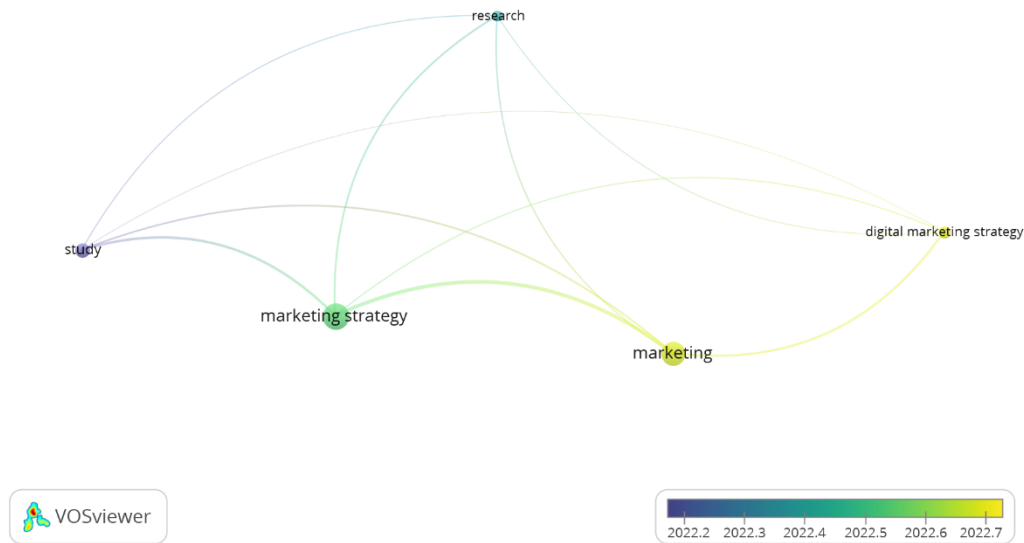


Figure 5. VOSviewer Marketing Strategy

This network visualization from VOSviewer illustrates the relationships between relevant concepts or keywords, where the size of the circles (nodes) reflects their frequency or significance, and the connecting lines (links) show associations with thickness representing the strength of these relationships. The colors of the nodes and links indicate a publication time scale, moving from earlier (blue, around early 2022) to more recent (yellow, around mid-2022). A key element in this visualization is the centrality of the "marketing strategy" node, which is strongly connected to "marketing" and "digital marketing strategy," highlighting a focus on marketing strategies, especially digital ones, relevant to the "within Marketing Strategy" context and the potential spread of "viral food." The connections to "research" and "study" suggest that the data originates from academic research. Although "word of mouth," "purchase decision," and "brand image" do not appear explicitly, their relevance is implied within the context of marketing strategy, particularly digital strategy, which often utilizes word of mouth to influence purchase decisions and build brand image. The color trend indicates that this topic is relatively recent in research. For a more profound understanding, information regarding the data type, the strength of the relationships, and the specific focus of the research underlying this visualization is necessary.

5. Conclusion

These network visualizations, generated by VOSviewer, offer a visual depiction of the relationships among key ideas and terms relevant to the study of how word of mouth and purchase decisions affect the brand image of viral food within the framework of marketing strategies. The size of each circle, or node, indicates the importance or frequency of a concept in the analyzed data, while the connecting lines, or links, show associations, with thicker lines representing stronger relationships. The color of the nodes and links often signifies a timeline of publications, ranging from earlier (blue hues) to more recent (yellow hues). Across these visualizations, several core themes emerge. The concept of "impact" frequently appears as a central focus, suggesting its importance in the analyzed research. Terms related to "word of mouth," such as "word," "mouth," "electronic word," and "ewom," often show strong connections to "brand image," indicating the significant role of both traditional and digital word of mouth in shaping how viral food brands are perceived. Furthermore, a relationship between "purchase decision" and "brand image" highlights the interplay between consumer buying choices and brand perception. The presence of "viral food" as a connected node underscores the specific context of the research. "Marketing strategy" consistently appears as a key concept, often linked with "digital marketing strategy," emphasizing the strategic framework of the research and the importance of digital aspects in the spread and perception of viral food. Concepts like "purchase intention," "effect," "significant effect," "study," "analysis," and "factor" further elaborate on the analytical approaches and identified elements within the research. Collectively, these visualizations suggest a research landscape focused on understanding the multifaceted influences on the brand image of viral food within marketing strategies. While specific terms of interest might not always be directly labeled and central, their relevance is implied through the network of related concepts and the overall emphasis on impact and strategic marketing, particularly in the digital realm. The evolution of research in this area is also hinted at by the color-coded timelines. To gain a more detailed and accurate understanding from these visualizations, additional information about the data sources, the strength of the connections between concepts, and the specific research questions guiding the analyses would be invaluable.

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